



CD 2002-115

Wednesday Discovery
presents

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

Max Christie, clarinet

Lydia Wong, piano

Wednesday, October 23, 2002
12:10 pm. Walter Hall

3 **Francis Poulenc**
1899-1963

Sonata for Clarinet and Piano (1962)
Allegro Tristamente
Romanza
Allegro con Fuoco

2 **Bohuslav Martinu**
1890-1959

Sonatina for Clarinet and Piano (1957)
Moderato
Andante
Poco Allegro

1 **Aaron Copland**
1900-1990

Sonata for Clarinet and Piano (transcribed by the
composer from his Sonata for Violin and Piano; 1943)
Andante semplice-Allegro
Lento
Allegretto giusto

This recital is performed on the Edith McConica Steinway piano

October 30

Symposium on Handel's *Alcina*

A discussion by the creative team and musicologist Mary Ann Parker,
chaired by Iain Scott, with excerpts performed by members of the cast.

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211-20 Connection? Quelle Connection?

One struggles to hear in the voices of these three composers evidence of something in common. Each might be said to have captured a local essence, the serious or art music of their respective countries, which is at best a tenuous connection among them. Whatever else may be said of how they each arrived at their own style, one can most readily hear how individual their voices are. It is perhaps nearly long enough since they wrote to begin to audibly discern what might be the link, but such links are more easily heard in contrast to style periods that follow.

The twentieth century in music, as in the other arts, was remarkable for diverse artistic expressions. In earlier periods a European composer might have sought to find his or her voice within a conforming school. By contrast, the earlier 20th century witnessed a flourish of compositional experimentation, of a hybridization of styles and genres, of interaction between the practitioners of all of the performing arts, and of seeking something new. This degeneration of borders, this practiced breach with the past, had its capital city in Paris.

The composers on this program each took advantage of the freedom afforded by this cultural village. Poulenc was born to a wealthy family, a privileged denizen of the Parisian elite. Martinu came to Paris in 1923, when he was thirty-four, and stayed seventeen years, when he moved on to North America. Copland came to study at Fontainebleau with Nadia Boulanger, at a summer program intended at first mostly for young American amateurs, and stayed two more years in Paris.

One link between them is that they found and fostered their individual voices in the perfect artistic climate for the task, and that they allowed the variety of influences encountered there to complement but not subsume their particular expression. Martinu, in voluntary exile for most of his adult life, makes constant reference to the folk music of his Moravian homeland, a place he left permanently in his middle years. Copland came to be heard as the defining musical voice of America, particularly in the music he wrote during the second world war. And Poulenc? Mais, c'est evident. Il est Francais, c'est tout.

Aside from these distinctions they had in common a willingness to hear and respond to musical styles that had nothing to do with any particular school; so that we have popular dance music and Moroccan melodic fragments in Poulenc, Mexican folk melody and jazz rhythms in Copland's sonata, and a thoroughly modern harmonic and rhythmic sensibility governing Martinu's folk-like dances. The lament at the heart of the Martinu balances beautifully the more cheery outer sections. It is a gem, a song that comes from nowhere one could name, unless from homesickness.

Artist Biographies

Max Christie is a busy and committed member of Toronto's freelance corps. He performs as Principal Clarinet of the National Ballet Orchestra, but the bulk of his work is in preparing and performing new music with some of the many fine ensembles for which Toronto is becoming well-known. He recently recorded a CD of the music of Melissa Hui and is heard on the recent Juno-nominated recording of the music of Alexina Louie. He performs with the Esprit Orchestra, New Music Concerts, and the Encounters ensemble, often in concerts broadcast on CBC radio. This November he will be performing the music of Pierre Boulez with New Music Concerts and Maestro Boulez conducting. Trained in Toronto and at Yale University, Mr. Christie teaches at both the University of Toronto and the Glenn Gould School.

One of Canada's most sought after collaborative pianists, acclaimed for her 'vivacious playing' (Daily Telegraph) and 'sparkling clarity' (The Strad) **Lydia Wong** appears regularly with the world's pre-eminent performers in venues across the globe from Carnegie Recital Hall in New York City to London's Wigmore Hall. She can be heard on CentreDiscs, Marquis Classics and Phoenix Records and has performed for networks in North America, Africa and Europe besides broadcasting regularly for the CBC. A faculty member of the summer music program at the Banff Centre in Alberta, Canada since 1992, she joined the faculty of the University of Toronto in 1998.